

Moscow Covered Bridge Dedication | September 29, 2010

Well, to Jack and everyone who's spoken but to all those who didn't speak but had a hand in this, heartfelt thanks. I bring you that thanks on behalf of many people, millions, who will join our celebration today and wish they could have been here. In this assignment of mine you get to see a lot of joy and a lot of happiness. You get to see a lot of heartache too, unfortunately. There was probably never a sadder day in my service than the day we lost this bridge. We lost a life here. We lost, as Jack reminded us, the landmarks of a historic community all at one time.

Standing over there on a pile of rubble and looking at what had once been this magnificent structure lying down there in the river bed, was one of the most down moments I can recall. And it wasn't just here. This got some attention. There was something about the Moscow loss that just reached people elsewhere. I was all over this state. Those tornados hit a lot of our communities. Everywhere I went, even in places that had been very devastated themselves, somebody asked me "Wasn't that terrible about that bridge?" They didn't even know how to pronounce Moscow, but it had really reached them. And they were just as sad about that as they were what had happened in their own area.

We took a look, but it didn't take long to realize that we could not justify, given the modern circumstances, we couldn't justify taking dollars—your state tax dollars—from something else to put here. As much as our hearts might have wanted us to do it. But I couldn't get this whole thing out of my mind. And so, you know we've got a proud tradition in this state of barn raising. When this community started, I don't doubt there were structures right near here that were first put together, not by the owners alone, but by the neighbors coming together to do it and to help them.

And those are always the best projects of all, and that's what we're looking at there. And all the neighbors, individuals and organizations who participated, I hope have all been named; although there are far too many to get them all, I know. But it's not just what was accomplished here but the way it was accomplished that I will always remember and be so proud of. Not personally proud, proud of those who made it happen, and of the spirit that still lives in this state that enables things like that to happen.

There's one group, and I think Jim mentioned parenthetically, but ya'll might not have caught it, that I just want to add to the list of those we've appreciated here. We did ask every department of state government to cooperate whenever possible. I remember the day when nobody could find a crane and INDOT put the arm on somebody and caught some poor, unsuspecting contractor. Obviously Jack Seifert, our forester, found wood on state land somewhere. Rob Carter and the folks at DNR found a million ways to help. But the one I think is most interesting was that some of those that lost their way on life's path and are currently among the guests at our

state correctional facilities, came out here and put in an awful lot of time. John, I don't know how many hours. I don't know if anyone kept track. I had asked that a few of them be here today and I believe that got taken care of. On behalf of many, many more of our inmates who had a very direct and important hand in here, (named several inmates) are with us and hope that you will show them very heartfelt appreciation and the wish that the productivity that they demonstrated here will characterize the rest of their lives when they leave our care. Gentlemen, thank you very much.

Everything has been so well said already. It needs no repetition from me. I just want to celebrate. I just look forward to telling this story, now that it's complete, elsewhere in the state. Everything that is best about us has come together in this project and in that structure, as far as I'm concerned. Our reverence for our history, our compassion and concern for each other, our willingness to pitch in when asked to help a neighbor in need. And maybe most of all our love for the traditional communities, the places where people know each other, know each other's secrets, know each other's problems, and always have time to lend a hand. This we will never let go of in Indiana. Everybody who has made this magnificent structure come back to life has proved it. Thank you very much.